HE KNEW LINCOLN

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BY

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To My Mother

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HE KNEW LINCOLN

"DID I know Lincoln? Well, I should say. See that chair there? Take it, set down. That's right. Comfortable, ain't it? Well, sir, Abraham Lincoln has set in that chair hours, him and Little 'Doug,' and Logan and Judge Davis, all of 'em, all the big men in this State, set in that chair. See them marks? Whittlin'. Judge Logan did it, all-firedest man to whittle. Always cuttin' away at something. I just got that chair new, paid six dollars for it, and I be blamed if I didn't come in this store and find him slashin' right into that arm. I picked up a stick and said: 'Here, Judge, s'posin' you cut this.' He just looked at me and

then flounced out, mad as a wet hen. Mr. Lincoln was here, and you ought to heard him tee-hee. He was always here. Come and set by the stove by the hour and tell stories and talk and argue. I'd ruther heard the debates them men had around this old stove than heard Webster and Clay and Calhoun and the whole United States Senate. There wan't never no United States Senate that could beat just what I've heard right here in this room with Lincoln settin' in that very chair where you are this minute.

"He traded here. I've got his accounts now. See here, 'quinine, quinine, quinine.' Greatest hand to buy quinine you ever seen. Give it to his constituents. Oh, he knew how to be popular, Mr. Lincoln did. Cutest man in politics. I wan't a Whig. I was then and I am now a Democrat, a real old-fashioned Jackson Democrat, and

"Come and set by the stove by the hour and tell stories and talk and argue"

my blood just would rise up sometimes hearin' him discuss. He was a dangerous man — a durned dangerous man to have agin you. He'd make you think a thing when you knew it wan't so, and cute! Why, he'd just slide in when you wan't expectin' it and do some unexpected thing that just'd make you laugh, and then he'd get your vote. You'd vote for him because you liked him — just because you liked him and because he was so all-fired smart, and do it when you knew he was wrong and it was agin the interest of the country.

"Tell stories? Nobody ever could beat him at that, and how he'd enjoy 'em, just slap his hands on his knees and jump up and turn around and then set down, laughin' to kill. Greatest man to git new yarns that ever lived, always askin', 'Heard any new stories, Billy?' And if

I had I'd trot 'em out, and how he'd laugh. Often and often when I've told him something new and he'd kin' a forgit how it went, he'd come in and say, 'Billy, how was that story you'se tellin' me?' and then I'd tell it all over.

"He was away a lot, you know, ridin' the circuit along with some right smart lawyers. They had great doin's. Nuthin' to do evenings but to set around the tavern stove tellin' stories. That was enough when Lincoln was there. They was all lost without him. Old Judge Davis was boss of that lot, and he never would settle down till Lincoln got around. I've heard 'em laugh lots of times how the Judge would fuss around and keep askin', 'Where's Mr. Lincoln, why don't Mr. Lincoln come? Somebody go and find Lincoln,' and when Lincoln came he would just settle back and get him started

to yarning, and there they'd set half the night.

"When he got home he'd come right in here first time he was downtown and tell me every blamed yarn he'd heard. Whole crowd would get in here sometimes and talk over the trip, and I tell you it was something to hear 'em laugh. You could tell how Lincoln kept things stirred up. He was so blamed quick. Ever hear Judge Weldon tell that story about what Lincoln said one day up to Bloomington when they was takin' up a subscription to buy Jim Wheeler a new pair of pants? No? Well, perhaps I oughten to tell it to you, ma says it ain't nice. It makes me mad to hear people objectin' to Mr. Lincoln's stories. Mebbe he did say words you wouldn't expect to hear at a church supper, but he never put no meanin' into 'em that wouldn't 'a' been fit for

the minister to put into a sermon, and that's a blamed sight more'n you can say of a lot of stories I've heard some of the people tell who stick up their noses at Mr. Lincoln's yarns.

"Yes, sir, he used to keep things purty well stirred up on that circuit. That time I was a speakin' of he made Judge Davis real mad; it happened right in court and everybody got to gigglin' fit to kill. The Judge knew 'twas something Lincoln had said and he began to sputter.

"'I am not going to stand this any longer, Mr. Lincoln, you're always disturbin' this court with your tomfoolery. I'm goin' to fine you. The clerk will fine Mr. Lincoln five dollars for disorderly conduct.' The boys said Lincoln never said a word; he just set lookin' down with his hand over his mouth, tryin' not to laugh. About a minute later the Judge,

who was always on pins and needles till he knew all the fun that was goin' on, called up Weldon and whispered to him, 'What was that Lincoln said?' Weldon told him, and I'll be blamed if the Judge didn't giggle right out loud there in court. The joke was on him then, and he knew it, and soon as he got his face straight he said, dignified like, 'The clerk may remit Mr. Lincoln's fine.'

"Yes, he was a mighty cute story-teller, but he knew what he was about tellin' 'em. I tell you he got more arguments out of stories than he did out of law books, and the queer part was you couldn't answer 'em — they just made you see it and you couldn't get around it. I'm a Democrat, but I'll be blamed if I didn't have to vote for Mr. Lincoln as President, couldn't help it, and it was all on account of that snake story of his'n illustratin'

the takin' of slavery into Kansas and Nebraska. Remember it? I heard him tell it in a speech once.

"'If I saw a pizen snake crawlin' in the road,' he says, 'I'd kill it with the first thing I could grab; but if I found it in bed with my children, I'd be mighty careful how I touched it fear I'd make it bite the children. If I found it in bed with somebody else's children I'd let them take care of it; but if I found somebody puttin' a whole batch of young snakes into an empty bed where mine or anybody's children was going to sleep pretty soon, I'd stop him from doin' it if I had to fight him.' Perhaps he didn't say 'fight him,' but somehow I always tell that story that way because I know I would and so would he or you or anybody. That was what it was all about when you come down to it. They was trying to put a batch

of snakes into an empty bed that folks was goin' to sleep in.

"Before I heard that story I'd heard Lincoln say a hundred times, settin' right there in that chair, where you are, 'Boys, we've got to stop slavery or it's goin' to spread all over this country,' but, somehow, I didn't see it before. Them snakes finished me. Then I knew he'd got it right and I'd got to vote for him. Pretty tough, though, for me to go back on Little 'Doug.' You see he was our great man, so we thought. Been to the United States Senate and knew all the big bugs all over the country. Sort o' looked and talked great. Wan't no comparison between him and Lincoln in looks and talk. Of course, we all knew he wan't honest, like Lincoln, but blamed if I didn't think in them days Lincoln was too all-fired honest — kind of innocent honest. He couldn't stand it

nohow to have things said that wan't so. He just felt plumb bad about lies. I remember once bein' in court over to Decatur when Mr. Lincoln was tryin' a case. There was a fellow agin him that didn't have no prejudices against lyin' in a lawsuit, and he was tellin' how Lincoln had said this an' that, tryin' to mix up the jury. It was snowin' bad outside, and Mr. Lincoln had wet his feet and he was tryin' to dry 'em at the stove. He had pulled off one shoe and was settin' there holdin' up his great big foot, his forehead all puckered up, listenin' to that ornery lawyer's lies. All at onct he jumped up and hopped right out into the middle of the courtroom.

"'Now, Judge,' he says, 'that ain't fair. I didn't say no sich thing, and he knows I didn't. I ain't goin' to have this jury all fuddled up.'

"You never see anything so funny in a court-room as that big fellow standin' there in one stockin' foot, a shoe in his hand, talking so earnest. No, sir, he couldn't stand a lie.

"'Think he was a big man, then?' Nope — never did. Just as I said, we all thought Douglas was *our* big man. You know I felt kind of sorry for Lincoln when they began to talk about him for President. It seemed almost as if somebody was makin' fun of him. He didn't look like a president. I never had seen one, but we had pictures of 'em, all of 'em from George Washington down, and they looked somehow as if they were different kind of timber from us. Leastwise that's always the way it struck me. Now Mr. Lincoln he was just like your own folks — no trouble to talk to him, no siree. Somehow you just settled down

comfortable to visitin' the minute he come in. I couldn't imagine George Washington or Thomas Jefferson settin' here in that chair you're in tee-heein' over some blamed yarn of mine. None of us around town took much stock in his bein' elected at first — that is, none of the men, the women was different. They always believed in him, and used to say, 'You mark my word, Mr. Lincoln will be president. He's just made for it, he's good, he's the best man ever lived and he ought to be president.' I didn't see no logic in that then, but I dunno but there was some after all.

"It seems all right now though. I reckon I learned somethin' watchin' him be President — learned a lot — not that it made any difference in *him*. Funniest thing to see him goin' around in this town — not a mite changed — and the

whole United States a watchin' him and the biggest men in the country runnin' after him and reporters hangin' around to talk to him and fellers makin' his pictures in ile and every other way. That didn't make no difference to him — only he didn't like bein' so busy he couldn't come in here much. He had a room over there in the Court House — room on that corner there. I never looked up that it wan't chuck full of people wantin' him. This old town was full of people all the time — delegations and committees and politicians and newspaper men. Only time I ever see Horace Greeley, he came in here to buy quinine. Mr. Lincoln sent him. Think of that, Horace Greeley buyin' quinine of *me*.

"No end of other great men around. He saw 'em all. Sometimes I used to step over and watch him — didn't bother him

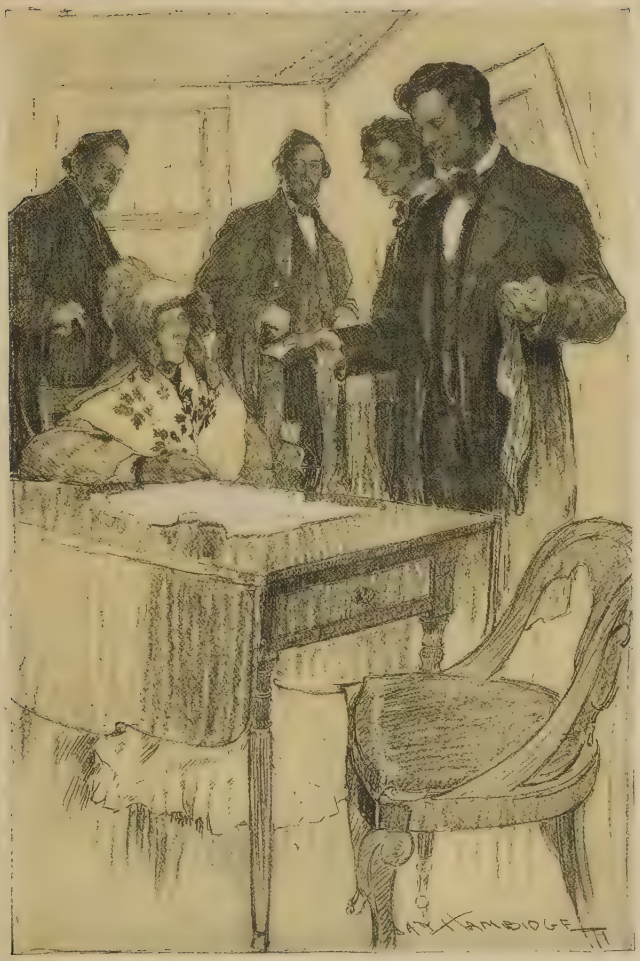
a mite to see a big man — not a mite. He'd jest shake hands and talk as easy and natural as if 'twas me — and he didn't do no struttin' either. Some of the fellers who come to see him looked as if *they* was goin' to be president, but Mr. Lincoln didn't put on any airs. No, sir, and he didn't cut any of his old friends either. Tickled to death to see 'em every time, and they all come — blamed if every old man and woman in Sangamon County didn't trot up here to see him. They'd all knowed him when he was keepin' store down to New Salem and swingin' a chain — surveyed lots of their towns for 'em — he had — and then he'd electioneered all over that county, too, so they just come in droves to bid him good-by. I was over there one day when old Aunt Sally Lowdy came in the door. Aunt Sally lived down near New Salem,

"Horace Greeley, he came in here to buy quinine"

and I expect she'd mended Mr. Lincoln's pants many a time; for all them old women down there just doted on him and took care of him as if he was their own boy. Well, Aunt Sally stood lookin' kind a scared seein' so many strangers and not knowin' precisely what to do, when Mr. Lincoln spied her. Quick as a wink he said, 'Excuse me, gentlemen,' and he just rushed over to that old woman and shook hands with both of his'n and says, 'Now, Aunt Sally, this is real kind of you to come and see me. How are you and how's Jake?' (Jake was her boy.) 'Come right over here,' and he led her over, as if she was the biggest lady in Illinois, and says, 'Gentlemen, this is a good old friend of mine. She can make the best flapjacks you ever tasted, and she's baked 'em for me many a time.' Aunt Sally was jest as pink as a rosy she was so tickled. And

she says, 'Abe'— all the old folks in Sangamon called him Abe. They knowed him as a boy, but don't you believe anybody ever did up here. No, sir, we said Mr. Lincoln. He was like one of us, but he wan't no man to be over familiar with. 'Abe,' says Aunt Sally, 'I had to come and say good-by. They say down our way they're goin' to kill you if they get you down to Washington, but I don't believe it. I just tell 'em you're too smart to let 'em git ahead of you that way. I thought I'd come and bring you a present, knit 'em myself,' and I'll be blamed if that old lady didn't pull out a great big pair of yarn socks and hand 'em to Mr. Lincoln.

"Well, sir, it was the funniest thing to see Mr. Lincoln's face pucker up and his eyes twinkle and twinkle. He took them socks and held 'em up by the toes, one in each hand. They was the longest socks I



"Aunt Sally, you couldn't a done nuthin' which would have pleased me better"

ever see. 'The lady got my latitude and longitude 'bout right, didn't she, gentlemen?' he says, and then he laid 'em down and he took Aunt Sally's hand and he says tender-like, 'Aunt Sally, you couldn't a done nothin' which would have pleased me better. I'll take 'em to Washington and wear 'em, and think of you when I do it.' And I declare he said it so first thing I knew I was almost blubberin', and I wan't the only one nuther, and I bet he did wear 'em in Washington. I can jest see him pullin' off his shoe and showin' them socks to Sumner or Seward or some other big bug that was botherin' him when he wanted to switch off on another subject and tellin' 'em the story about Aunt Sally and her flapjacks.

"'Was there much talk about his bein' killed?' Well, there's an awful lot of fools

in this world and when they don't git what they want they're always for killin' somebody. Mr. Lincoln never let on, but I reckon his mail was pretty lively readin' sometimes. He got pictures of gallows and pistols and other things and lots of threats, so they said. I don't think that worried him much. He was more bothered seein' old Buchanan givin' the game away. 'I wish I could have got down there before the horse was stole,' I heard him say onct in here, talkin' to some men. 'But I reckon I can find the tracks when I do git there.' It was his cabinet bothered him most, I always thought. He didn't know the men he'd got to take well enough. Didn't know how far he could count on 'em. He and Judge Gillespie and one or two others was in here one day sittin' by the stove talkin,' and he says, 'Judge, I wisht I could take all you

boys down to Washington with me, Democrats and all, and make a cabinet out of you. I'd know where every man would fit and we could git right down to work. Now, I've got to learn my men before I can do much.' 'Do you mean, Mr. Lincoln, you'd take a Democrat like Logan?' says the Judge, sort of shocked. 'Yes, sir, I would; I know Logan. He's agin me now and that's all right, but if we have trouble you can count on Logan to do the right thing by the country, and that's the kind of men I want — them as will do the right thing by the country. 'Tain't a question of Lincoln, or Democrat or Republican, Judge; it's a question of the country.'

"Of course he seemed pretty cheerful always. He wan't no man to show out all he felt. Lots of them little stuck-up chaps that came out here to talk to him said,

solemn as owls, 'He don't realize the gravity of the situation.' Them's their words, 'gravity of the situation.' Think of that, Mr. Lincoln not realizing. They ought to heard him talk to us the night he went away. I'll never forgit that speech — nor any man who heard it. I can see him now just how he looked, standin' there on the end of his car. He'd been shakin' hands with the crowd in the depot, laughing and talking, just like himself, but when he got onto that car he seemed suddint to be all changed. You never seen a face so sad in all the world. I tell you he had woe in his heart that minute, woe. He knew he was leavin' us for good, nuthin' else could explain the way he looked and what he said. He knew he never was comin' back alive. It was rainin' hard, but when we saw him standin' there in bare head, his great big eyes lookin' at

us so lovin' and mournful, every man of us took off his hat, just as if he'd been in church. You never heard him make a speech, of course? You missed a lot. Curious voice. You could hear it away off — kind of shrill, but went right to your heart — and that night it sounded sadder than anything I ever heard. You know I always hear it to this day, nights when the wind howls around the house. Ma says it makes her nervous to hear me talk about him such nights, but I can't help it; just have to let out

"He stood a minute lookin' at us, and then he began to talk. There ain't a man in this town that heard him that ever forgot what he said, but I don't believe there's a man that ever said it over out loud — he couldn't, without cryin'. He just talked to us that time out of his heart. Somehow we felt all of a suddint how we

loved him and how he loved us. We hadn't taken any stock in all that talk about his bein' killed, but when he said he was goin' away not knowin' where or whether ever he would return I just got cold all over. I begun to *see* that minute and everybody did. The women all fell to sobbin' and a kind of groan went up, and when he asked us to pray for him I don't believe that there was a man in that crowd, whether he ever went to church in his life, that didn't want to drop right down on his marrow bones and ask the Lord to take care of Abraham Lincoln and bring him back to us, where he belonged.

"'Ever see him again?' Yes, onct down in Washington, summer of '64. Things was lookin' purty blue that summer. Didn't seem to be anybody who thought he'd git reëlected. Greeley was

"He just talked to us that time out of his heart"

abusin' him in *The Tribune* for not makin' peace, and you know there was about half the North that always let Greeley do their thinkin' fer 'em. The war wan't comin' on at all — seemed as if they never would do nuthin'. Grant was hangin' on to Petersburg like a dog to a root, but it didn't seem to do no good. Same with Sherman, who was tryin' to take Atlanta. The country was just petered out with the everlastin' taxes an' fightin' an' dyin'. It wan't human nature to be patient any longer, and they just spit it out on Mr. Lincoln, and then, right on top of all the grumblin' and abusin', he up and made another draft. Course he was right, but I tell you nobody but a brave man would 'a' done such a thing at that minute; but he did it. It was hard on us out here. I tell you there wan't many houses in this country where there wan't mournin' goin'

on. It didn't seem as if we *could* stand any more blood lettin.' Some of the boys round the State went down to see him about it. They came back lookin' pretty sheepish. Joe Medill, up to Chicago, told me about it onct. He said, 'We just told Mr. Lincoln we couldn't stand another draft. We was through sendin' men down to Petersburg to be killed in trenches. He didn't say nuthin'; just stood still, lookin' down till we'd all talked ourselves out; and then, after a while, he lifted up his head, and looked around at us, slow-like; and I tell you, Billy, I never knew till that minute that Abraham Lincoln could get mad clean through. He was just white he was that mad. "Boys," he says, "you ought to be ashamed of yourselves. You're actin' like a lot of cowards. You've helped make this war, and you've got to help fight it. You go home and raise them men

'You're actin' like a lot of cowards. You've helped make this war, and you've got to help fight it"

and don't you dare come down here again blubberin' about what I tell you to do. I won't stan' it." We was so scared we never said a word. We just took our hats and went out like a lot of school-boys. Talk about Abraham Lincoln bein' easy! When it didn't matter mebbe he was easy, but when it did you couldn't stir him any more'n you could a mountain.'

"Well, I kept hearin' about the trouble he was havin' with everybody, and I just made up my mind I'd go down and see him and swap yarns and tell him how we was all countin' on his gettin' home. Thought maybe it would cheer him up to know we set such store on his comin' home if they didn't want him for president. So I jest picked up and went right off. Ma was real good about my goin'. She says, 'I shouldn't wonder if 'twould do him good, William. And don't you ask

him no questions about the war nor about politics. You just talk home to him and tell him some of them foolish stories of yourn.'

"Well, I had a brother in Washington, clerk in a department — awful set up 'cause he had an office — and when I got down there I told him I'd come to visit Mr. Lincoln. He says, 'William, be you a fool? Folks don't visit the President of the United States without an invitation, and he's too busy to see anybody but the very biggest people in this administration. Why, he don't even see me,' he says. Well, it made me huffy to hear him talk. 'Isaac,' I says, 'I don't wonder Mr. Lincoln don't see you. But it's different with me. Him and me is friends.'

"'Well' he says, 'you've got to have cards anyway.' 'Cards,' I says, 'what for? What kind?' 'Why,' he says, 'visit-

in' cards — with your name on.' 'Well,' I says, 'it's come to a pretty pass, if an old friend like me can't see Mr. Lincoln without sendin' him a piece of pasteboard. I'd be ashamed to do such a thing, Isaac Brown. Do you suppose he's forgotten me? Needs to see my name printed out to know who I am? You can't make me believe any such thing,' and I walked right out of the room, and that night I footed it up to the Soldiers' Home where Mr. Lincoln was livin' then, right among the sick soldiers in their tents.

"There was lots of people settin' around in a little room, waitin' fer him, but there wan't anybody there I knowed, and I was feelin' a little funny when a door opened and out came little John Nicolay. He came from down this way, so I just went up and says, 'How'd you do, John; where's Mr Lincoln?'

Well, John didn't seem over glad to see me.

"'Have you an appintment with Mr. Lincoln?' he says.

"'No, sir,' I says; 'I ain't, and it ain't necessary. Mebbe it's all right and fittin' for them as wants post-offices to have appintments, but I reckon Mr. Lincoln's old friends don't need 'em, so you just trot along, Johnnie, and tell him Billy Brown's here and see what he says.' Well, he kind a flushed up and set his lips together, but he knowed me, and so he went off. In about two minutes the door popped open and out came Mr. Lincoln, his face all lit up. He saw me first thing, and he laid holt of me and just shook my hands fit to kill. 'Billy,' he says, 'now I am glad to see you. Come right in. You're goin' to stay to supper with Mary and me.'

"We went out on the back stoop and sat down and talked and talked"

"Didn't I know it? Think bein' president would change him — not a mite. Well, he had a right smart lot of people to see, but soon as he was through we went out on the back stoop and set down and talked and talked. He asked me about pretty nigh everybody in Springfield. I just let loose and told him about the weddin's and births and the funerals and the buildin', and I guess there wan't a yarn I'd heard in the three years and a half he'd been away that I didn't spin for him. Laugh — you ought to a heard him laugh — just did my heart good, for I could see what they'd been doin' to him. Always was a thin man, but, Lordy, he was thinner'n ever now, and his face was kind a drawn and gray — enough to make you cry.

"Well, we had supper and then talked some more, and about ten o'clock I start-

ed downtown. Wanted me to stay all night, but I says to myself, 'Billy, don't you overdo it. You've cheered him up, and you better light out and let him remember it when he's tired.' So I said, 'Nope, Mr. Lincoln, can't, goin' back to Springfield to-morrow. Ma don't like to have me away and my boy ain't no great shakes keepin' store.' 'Billy,' he says, 'what did you come down here for?' 'I come to see you, Mr. Lincoln.' 'But you ain't asked me for anything, Billy. What is it? Out with it. Want a post-office?' he said, gigglin', for he knowed I didn't. 'No, Mr. Lincoln, just wanted to see *you* — felt kind a lonesome — been so long since I'd sen you, and I was afraid I'd forgit some of them yarns if I didn't unload soon.'

"Well, sir, you ought to seen his face as he looked at me.

"'Billy Brown,' he says, slow-like, 'do you mean to tell me you came all the way from Springfield, Illinois, just to have a *visit* with *me*, that you don't want an office for anybody, nor a pardon for anybody, that you ain't got no complaints in your pockets, nor any advice up your sleeve?'

"'Yes, sir,' I says, 'that's about it, and I'll be durned if I wouldn't go to *Europe* to see you, if I couldn't do it no other way, Mr. Lincoln.'

"Well, sir, I never was so astonished in my life. He just grabbed my hand and shook it nearly off, and the tears just poured down his face, and he says, 'Billy, you never'll know what good you've done me. I'm homesick, Billy, just plumb homesick, and it seems as if this war never would be over. Many a night I can see the boys a-dyin' on the fields and can

hear their mothers cryin' for 'em at home, and I can't help 'em, Billy. I have to send them down there. We've got to save the Union, Billy, we've got to.'

"'Course we have, Mr. Lincoln,' I says, cheerful as I could, 'course we have. Don't you worry. It's most over. You're goin' to be reëlected, and you and old Grant's goin' to finish this war mighty quick then. Just keep a stiff upper lip, Mr. Lincoln, and don't forget them yarns I told you.' And I started out. But seems as if he couldn't let me go. 'Wait a minute, Billy,' he says, 'till I get my hat and I'll walk a piece with you.' It was one of them still sweet-smellin' summer nights with no end of stars and you ain't no idee how pretty 'twas walkin' down the road. There was white tents showin' through the trees and every little way a tall soldier standin' stock still, a gun at his side.

Made me feel mighty curious and solemn. By-and-by we come out of the trees to a sightly place where you could look all over Washington — see the Potomac and clean into Virginia. There was a bench there and we set down and after a while Mr. Lincoln he begun to talk. Well, sir, you or nobody ever heard anything like it. Blamed if he didn't tell me the whole thing — all about the war and the generals and Seward and Sumner and Congress and Greeley and the whole blamed lot. He just opened up his heart if I do say it. Seemed as if he'd come to a p'int where he must let out. I dunno how long we set there — must have been nigh morning, fer the stars begun to go out before he got up to go. 'Good-by, Billy,' he says. 'you're the first person I ever unloaded onto, and I hope you won't think I'm a baby,' and then we shook

hands again, and I walked down to town and next day I come home.

"Tell you what he said? Nope, I can't. Can't talk about it somehow. Fact is, I never told anybody about what he said that night. Tried to tell ma onct, but she cried, so I give it up.

"Yes, that's the last time I seen him — last time alive.

"Wan't long after that things began to look better. War began to move right smart, and, soon as it did, there wan't no use talkin' about anybody else for President. I see that plain enough, and, just as I told him, he was reëlected, and him an' Grant finished up the war in a hurry. I tell you it was a great day out here when we heard Lee had surrendered. 'Twas just like gettin' converted to have the war over. Somehow the only thing I could think of was how glad Mr. Lincoln would

be. Me and ma reckoned he'd come right out and make us a visit and get rested, and we began right off to make plans about the reception we'd give him — brass band — parade — speeches fireworks — everything. Seems as if I couldn't think about anything else. I was comin' down to open the store one mornin', and all the way down I was plannin' how I'd decorate the windows and how I'd tie a flag on that old chair, when I see Hiram Jones comin' toward me. He looked so old and all bent over I didn't know what had happened. 'Hiram,' I says, 'what's the matter? Be you sick?'

"'Billy,' he says, and he couldn't hardly say it, 'Billy, they've killed Mr. Lincoln.'

"Well, I just turned cold all over, and then I flared up. 'Hiram Jones,' I says,

'you're lyin,' you're crazy. How dare you tell me that? It ain't so.'

"'Don't Billy,' he says, 'don't go on so. I ain't lyin'. It's so. He'll never come back, Billy. He's dead!' And he fell to sobbin' out loud right there in the street, and somehow I knew it was true.

"I come on down and opened the door. People must have paregoric and castor ile and liniment, no matter who dies; but I didn't put up the shades. I just sat here and thought and thought and groaned and groaned. It seemed that day as if the country was plumb ruined and I didn't care much. All I could think of was *him*. He wan't goin' to come back. He wouldn't never sit here in that chair again. He was dead.

"For days and days 'twas awful here. Waitin' and waitin'. Seemed as if that funeral never would end. I couldn't bear

to think of him bein' dragged around the country and havin' all that fuss made over him. He always hated fussin' so. Still, I s'pose I'd been mad if they hadn't done it. Seemed awful, though. I kind a felt that he belonged to us now, that they ought to bring him back and let us have him now they'd killed him.

"Of course they got here at last, and I must say it was pretty grand. All sorts of big bugs, Senators and Congressmen, and officers in grand uniforms and music and flags and crape. They certainly didn't spare no pains givin' him a funeral. Only we didn't want 'em. We wanted to bury him ourselves, but they wouldn't let us. I went over onct where they'd laid him out for folks to see. I reckon I won't tell you about that. I ain't never goin' to get that out of my mind. I wisht a million times I'd never seen him lyin' there black

and changed — that I could only see him as he looked sayin' 'good-by' to me up to the Soldiers' Home in Washington that night.

"Ma and me didn't go to the cemetery with 'em. I couldn't stan' it. Didn't seem right to have sich goin's on here at home where he belonged, for a man like him. But we go up often now, ma and me does, and talk about him. Blamed if it don't seem sometimes as if he was right there — might step out any minute and say 'Hello, Billy, any new stories?'

"Yes. I knowed Abraham Lincoln; knowed him well; and I tell you there wan't never a better man made. Leastwise I don't want to know a better one. He just suited *me* — Abraham Lincoln did."

THE END

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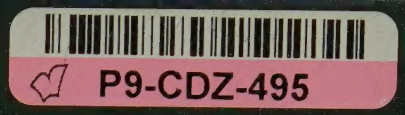
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